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Adoption of the report of the Committee on its fifty-fifth session

Draft report

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Addendum

Programme questions: evaluation
(*item 3 (b)*)

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the evaluation of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

1. At its 3rd meeting, on 3 June 2015, the Committee for Programme and Coordination considered the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on the evaluation of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) (E/AC.51/2015/6).

2. The Director of the Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS introduced the report and, together with representatives of ECLAC, responded to questions raised during the Committee's consideration of the report.

Discussion

3. Delegations expressed appreciation for the report and the positive overall assessment of the work of ECLAC, including its support in the development of policies, the promotion of regional integration and the harmonization of statistics. Delegations also noted positively the visibility of ECLAC and the importance of its work, which was highly regarded and referenced, including its work with regional and subregional integration mechanisms and organizations (para. 44).

4. Delegations expressed appreciation for the analysis provided by OIOS of the resources allocated to ECLAC to tackle expanding mandates and numerous thematic areas in the context of a diverse region with different priorities and requirements. While concern was expressed at the diminishing regular budget resources over the

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past three bienniums, satisfaction was expressed with the allocation of resources by subprogramme. Note was taken of the impact of the downward trend in resources, including the pressure on the existing organizational structure and available resources, the termination of involvement in specific thematic areas and the lack of continuity of ECLAC involvement in various national policy issues. Clarification was sought on the impact of those changes.

5. Delegations raised specific concerns in relation to perceived contradictions in the report on how stakeholders and technical ministries had responded regarding the utility of the work of ECLAC. Some delegations noted that in some paragraphs OIOS had reported that a high percentage of respondents had stated that ECLAC had been effective in informing decision-making, while in others OIOS had stated that ECLAC had not widely disseminated its publications. Delegations expressed the view that those were separate issues and voiced concern that the report contained value judgements that contradicted the statistics provided. It was suggested that, in one case, technical ministries that had accessed ECLAC publications had expressed their satisfaction with how those publications had influenced their decision-making and, in the other case, reference had been made to technical ministries that lacked access to the publications produced by ECLAC and therefore could not use them; that particular situation could be due to respondents recognizing that they did not have full knowledge of the array of publications produced by ECLAC within their thematic area of focus.

6. In relation to activities in the area of research and analysis, clarification was sought regarding the reduction of more than 100 outputs from the period 2012-2013 to the period 2014-2015 and how the research and analysis products were being funded, in particular the distribution of funds between regular budget and extrabudgetary resources. The view was expressed that the evaluation had focused too strongly on research and analysis activities and that it should have included more information on the technical assistance provided by ECLAC.

7. Delegations specifically asked how ECLAC was addressing the issue of gender, noting in particular that it had not been mentioned among the five thematic areas of work (social, economic, environmental, statistics and public administration and subregional activities). Clarification was sought as to whether gender aspects were being mainstreamed into the work of ECLAC.

8. Delegations requested information on how ECLAC was working on identifying and supporting discussions about emerging development issues important to the region, such as the governance of natural resources or the economics of climate change.

9. Some delegations noted that OIOS had made limited reference to the important and catalytic role of South-South cooperation. Specific questions were raised in that regard, including the link between South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation. Information was requested on the percentage of extrabudgetary and regular budget resources used to fund South-South cooperation.

10. Delegations more broadly posed questions on the implementation of the recommendations and the strategies that ECLAC had to carry them through, specifically regarding the strengthening of the evaluation function and the creation of a separate evaluation unit, including whether that would be included in any future budget proposals and whether there were arrangements to ensure that the recommendation was actionable.

11. Delegations posed questions on paragraph 31 of the report, in which it was indicated that only 33 per cent of Caribbean respondents surveyed thought that ECLAC made contributions to the regional or subregional policymaking or decision-making processes that no other entities could provide. Delegations sought information on what could be done to improve the situation and expressed interest in learning about the previous evaluations undertaken by ECLAC to improve the support and assistance provided in the subregion and how the implementation of those recommendations could prove useful in further strengthening the assistance provided by ECLAC.

12. Delegations sought clarification from ECLAC on specific aspects of the analysis and recommendations contained in the report, including in relation to the availability of publications in languages spoken in the region, including French and Portuguese, as well as on the response of ECLAC to individual requests from Governments and an engagement strategy vis-à-vis national policymakers. Delegations highlighted in that regard that national strategies should be driven primarily by demand from member States and that the role of the regional commissions overall was driven by their member States.

Conclusions and recommendations

13. **The Committee recommended that the General Assembly should endorse the recommendations contained in paragraph 74 of the report of OIOS on the evaluation of ECLAC.**

14. **The Committee noted with appreciation that OIOS had recognized some of the key strengths of and challenges faced by ECLAC, among them the fact that ECLAC had raised important and relevant development policy issues among member States in the region while maintaining its impartiality and facilitating regional and subregional integration initiatives. The Committee acknowledged that ECLAC had also effectively supported policymaking and decision-making at the national level upon requests for technical assistance from member States.**

15. **The Committee welcomed the fact that ECLAC had studied the report carefully and had welcomed the findings and insights. It also expressed appreciation for the fact that ECLAC would support organizational learning in strengthening the effectiveness of the use of its available resources, the dissemination of its work both to the public in general and to national authorities and policymakers, and the establishment of mechanisms to further improve the inclusion of the Caribbean perspective in the work programme of ECLAC substantive divisions and its reporting and evaluation mechanisms. It was also acknowledged as a positive step that ECLAC had prepared a detailed action plan, outlining work under way to follow up on the important recommendations in the report.**

16. **The Committee acknowledged the finding in the report regarding the increasing complexity of the development issues faced by the region. The Committee also noted the finding of the report that, at the organizational level, more demands were continually and cumulatively being made on ECLAC without any commensurate increase in resources and that, to retain its comparative advantages, ECLAC needed to assess its strategies and structure, given its current mandates, in the context of the realities and challenges identified in the evaluation.**